

Dragonshards

The Medusas of Droaam

By Keith Baker



Eberron is a world of magic. Many forms of life have been shaped by magical forces. This can be seen in the minor illusion-weaving ability of the gnomes, the teleporting blink dog, or the petrifying gaze of the medusa. The deadly power of a medusa can certainly inspire terror, and thinking of this creature as a simple monster is easy. But medusas are not savage predators, roaming the wastes in search of prey. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal are, on average, more intelligent than most humans, and they have a proud city-state in the midst of Droaam. The power of the medusas is a potent weapon in the arsenal of Droaam. But what role do medusas play in the monster nation? How are they seen in the outside world? And what can you expect when dealing with them?



The Kingdom of Stone

The medusas were born in Khyber, and no one on the surface knows the extent of their subterranean civilization. In 778 YK, a force of medusas emerged from the underworld and laid claim to the city of Cazhaak Draal, an ancient goblin metropolis that had been abandoned since the daelkyr incursion. Over the course of the last two hundred years, the medusas renovated Cazhaak Draal, repairing the ruins and domesticating many of the dangerous creatures found in the region. For the most part the medusas were content in their tiny kingdom: Cazhaak Draal was far larger than their numbers required, and many treasures and wonders existed in the ancient city. Explorers who ventured into the Stonelands rarely returned, but the medusas had little interest in the outside world.

This changed in 985 YK, when a mysterious visitor came to speak to the Queen of Stone: a gray-robed hag, who met the medusa's gaze without fear. Sora Teraza spoke with Queen Sheshka from sunrise to sunset, and after the hag departed, Sheshka spent the evening in silent contemplation. The next day she told her people to prepare for great change. Over the course of the next year she brought together a corps of medusas, preparing them for service in foreign lands. When the Daughters of Sora Kell assumed power in 986 YK, representatives of Cazhaak Draal were quickly dispatched to the Great Crag. Today medusa architects direct the ongoing construction of Droaam's capital. Medusas hold many positions of power, both in Droaam and in the monstrous communities that have since spread across Khorvaire; in Sharn, the medusa Kasslak maintains order in the dangerous district of Malleon's Gate, while a medusa named Harash is the second-in-command of Sharn's Daask cell. The deadly power of a medusa commands respect, but in a nation of ogres, minotaurs, and harpies,

the keen intellect of the medusa is often more useful than its petrifying gaze.

The people of Cazhaak Draal have prospered since the rise of the hags, and for the moment, the Queen of Stone is content to serve. The Daughters of Sora Kell are formidable enemies, and Sheshka does not have the power to challenge them. But the medusa queen is ambitious and cunning, and she is always searching for ways to increase her influence.

Children of Stone and Shadow

The Gatekeepers claim that medusas were created by the daelkyr Orlassk, but the medusa priests of Cazhaak Draal offer their devotions to the Shadow. They claim that the

Shadow shaped many of the creatures humans see as monsters, giving the harpy her deadly voice, hiding the displacer beast from its foes, and healing the wounds of the troll. These priests view the deities of the Sovereign Host as the true evil, comparing the exile of the Shadow to the fear with which many humans respond to medusas and other monsters.

For a look at variant medusas, consult the recent [Elite Opponents](#) article on these snaked-haired charmers.

Of course, some medusas do earn their evil reputation. Several revel in their powers and petrify lesser creatures for sport. But a medusa who calls this sort of attention to herself won't last long in one of the great cities of Khorvaire. Those medusas chosen to represent Droaam in the wider world are carefully vetted by Sheshka and officials of House Tharashk. The average medusa is more intelligent and cunning than the average human, and she understands the need to control her behavior among the soft people of Khorvaire. In Sharn, a medusa may move unfettered in the lawless districts, but if she enters a respectable neighborhood, she must wear eyoblinders, a metal visor secured with straps around forehead and chin; otherwise she may be attacked by the Blackened Book, Redcloak Battalion, or other agents of the law. Eyoblinders require a full minute to don or remove; in some cities, a medusa must have the blinders secured with a lock for the duration of her stay.

Despite their worship of the Shadow, medusas are no more inherently evil than humans or elves. Some are arrogant and proud, believing that their deadly gaze places them above mundane creatures. Others respond to the fear they encounter every day by despising those who fear them, a path that often leads to evil alignments. But many enjoy the same pleasures that humans do, and seek out song, good company, and the satisfaction of hard work. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal have a strong tradition of stonework, both architecture and purely aesthetic sculpture. In recent years, Councilor Kilk of Sharn has sought permission to bring in medusa architects and masons to perform work in Northedge, although to date the other councilors have refused to use city funds to pay for the services of monsters.

Medusa Customs

The gaze of a medusa can petrify even an ally, and as a result, a medusa does not meet the gaze of a person with whom it is conversing. Where she directs her eyes indicates her esteem for the person. She drops her eyes toward the ground to show respect, or looks up and over the person if she wishes to indicate disdain; when speaking to an equal, she glances to the left or right. If she wishes to show trust, she directs her gaze to the person, but closes her eyes.

While this may seem inconvenient to a human, it has little impact on a medusa. If a medusa concentrates, she can receive limited visual impressions from the serpents that make up her hair; as a result, though she seems to look elsewhere, she's actually looking through the eyes of her serpents. She can even use her serpents to see when she is blindfolded or has her eyes closed. However, she can still "see" in only one direction in this way; her serpents may look all around her, but she can't process the information from all of them at once. If a

medusa is relying solely on the visual input from her serpents, she suffers a -2 penalty on Spot and Search checks.

A medusa uses its living mane for many purposes. In addition to serving as weapons and a supplemental form of eyesight, a medusa's serpents also help her communicate. The motions of the serpents often reflect a medusa's mood, and a DM should consider the state of a medusa's mane when describing her actions. The medusas of Cazhaak Draal have developed a simple language called Serpentine, which is based on the motions and hissing of their snakes. Serpentine has no written aspect and can be spoken only by a medusa, but any creature can use Speak Language to learn to understand it. A medusa must learn Serpentine normally, but it is available to her as a bonus language.

The gaze of a medusa is a powerful weapon, but most medusas don't think of it as deadly. A petrified victim can be restored to life, after all; within their own society, medusas often use petrification as a way to preserve mortally wounded kin, so they can be restored at a later time when healing magic is available. Likewise, medusas dying of old age often choose to be petrified before they fully pass on; Cazhaak Draal contains a great catacomb filled with the stone remnants of respected medusa elders. This ties to the love of stonework common in the culture; when a medusa looks at a statue, she sees the life it represents.

While some medusas take an interest in archery, in general the medusas of Cazhaak Draal have little interest in physical combat; they prefer to win their battles with magic or cunning. Sorcerers, rogues, and experts are all common among the citizens of Cazhaak Draal; the city of stone is also home to smaller numbers of clerics, adepts, rangers, and fighters, with the latter specializing in ranged combat.

Medusa's Kiss

Transmutation

Level: Adept 3, Cleric 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 3; caster must be a medusa

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One petrified creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

A soft amber glow envelopes the creature, suffusing its form with sparkling, golden motes of light even as life returns to it.

Born with the ability to petrify others with a gaze, the medusas long ago developed a ritual to counteract their deadly gift.

Medusa's kiss reverses the effects of a medusa's gaze, restoring a petrified creature and its equipment to its normal state.

Medusa's kiss will not counteract any other form of petrification and cannot be used to transform stone objects into flesh.

This spell can be cast only by a medusa.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron Campaign Setting*** and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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